

Iran won't give up nuke plan

REUTERS, Tokyo

Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said yesterday that Tehran will not give up its nuclear program, but that ongoing talks with Russia to jointly enrich uranium would ease international concerns over its nuclear ambitions.

His comments came after the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said in a report on Monday that Iran was pursuing a nuclear fuel enrichment program and obstructing U.N. probes spurred by suspicions it is seeking to build nuclear weapons.

"We would like to enjoy our rights like Japan to have nuclear technology, of course for peaceful purposes," Mottaki told reporters after meeting Japanese Trade Minister Toshihiro Nikai.

"The Russian proposal would be a bridge between Iran's right to peaceful use of nuclear energy and (gaining) international trust," a Japanese official said.

On Sunday, Iran's nuclear chief said Tehran had reached a "basic" agreement with Russia on a joint venture to enrich uranium, but it was unclear if that meant Iran would give up enrichment work at home, the main demand of Western nations.

Mottaki told Nikai that Iran and Russia were still discussing where to carry out the joint enrichment, according to the Japanese official, who attended the meeting.

Mottaki had originally proposed that Iran's uranium be enriched in Russia to clear suspicions that Tehran might divert the nuclear fuel for weapons program.

But Iran has insisted on the right to enrich uranium on its own soil, saying its nuclear program is to meet increasing electricity demand caused by an expanding economy.

Mottaki told Kyodo news agency later on Tuesday that even if Iran agreed to accept the Russian proposal, it would not suspend its home-grown uranium enrichment program.

In a later meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, Mottaki urged Japanese companies to take part in Iran's nuclear power plant projects.

"I have requested to the Japanese prime minister for participation of the Japanese companies in our 10 to 15 nuclear power plant establishment," Mottaki told reporters.

"Because ... we have to produce 20,000 megawatts energy for electricity."

A Foreign Ministry official later said that Mottaki had merely said foreign participation might be invited to construct the nuclear power plants and had not specifically mentioned Japan.

Monday's IAEA report was circulated to the watchdog's board members.

Khaleda proposes

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ensure its victory by vote rigging?" she asked, adding, "But nobody can allow such a demand to be fulfilled."

In her one-hour-and-42-minute speech, Khaleda detailed what she claimed were her government's successes in different sectors.

Survived, yet agonised

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"My brother asked me to save my own life. Nobody can imagine how hard it is to bear with this memory," the 20-year-old helper of a mason said, struggling in vain to hold back his tears.

"When I asked Nikhil for going out to have breakfast at 10:35 that morning, he wanted me to go after 11:00am because the contractor would scold," Rinku said while talking to this correspondent at their Dakkhinpara house in Mohakhalhi yesterday.

While tearing down a wall on the east side of the building, the brothers all of a sudden saw a tide of dust falling from above. "I thought the wall above was collapsing and asked Nikhil to jump while jumping myself out of the room," Rinku said. "The place soon plunged into darkness."

Not finding Nikhil beside him, Rinku called out for his brother. "He responded to my call and said a heavy concrete slab fell on his left arm, pinning him to the ground. I

10 questions

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AMS Kibria, and the arms hauls and other political killings?

5. Will you expel or take actions against your cabinet members involved in militancy?

6. Will you make the Anti-Corruption Bureau truly functional and independent?

7. When will you separate the judiciary from the executive?

8. Who is running the government, the Prime Minister's Office or the Hawa Bhaban?

9. Who is responsible for the failures in combating terrorism and corruption, and improving the power structure?

10. Will you resign admitting your failures and incompetence to government?

bers before they meet on March 6 to discuss it. The report will be forwarded to the U.N. Security Council, where the United States and European powers are likely to call for sanctions against Iran.

The stand-off has put Japan in a bind between its policy to stay in diplomatic sync with the United States, its main security ally, and its plans to develop an Iranian oil field that Tokyo sees as vital to its energy strategy.

"Prime Minister, you will have to tell the House what measures will you take to keep the prices of essentials within the capacity of the common people?" Hasina asked.

"What steps will you [Prime Minister] take to resolve the power crisis in the summer to spare people the ordeals of huge load-shedding?" she asked the leader of the house amid boisterous support from AL lawmakers.

She asked Khaleda whether her government will involve the United Nations in investigating the major crimes including the August 21 grenade attacks, murder of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria, arms seizures in Chittagong, Bogra and Kuril of Dhaka, and all political killings under the rule of four-party alliance.

The former prime minister also wanted to know whether the cabinet members who have been accused of harbouring militants will be expelled from the government.

"Would you please inform the House when your government will separate the judiciary from the executive as per your electoral pledge?" she asked.

She demanded the government take immediate measures to make the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) a truly independent body.

In reference to Tarique Rahman, son of the incumbent prime minister, Hasina said she wonders how come a joint secretary general of a political party inaugurate an air base of the Bangladesh Air Force. Seeking an explanation from the prime minister, she said why should the chief of NSI [National Security Intelligence] accompany the senior joint secretary general in his visit to the US.

"I want to know from the prime minister is it true that Hawa Bhaban runs as a parallel power house against the Prime Minister's Office," said the former prime minister.

During her address, Hasina demanded the motion of thanks on the president's speech be withdrawn as, she said, the speech itself has that government's development has been diminished due to militancy and terrorism.

The two ministers agreed to establish a fast mode of communication for transferring the data.

The meeting decided that the designated agencies on both sides would soon work out the modalities for sharing data on the Brahmaputra river.

The Chinese side offered to share their expertise and technology in flood control and water resources management in comparable situations in Bangladesh.

The minister-level meeting will be followed up by a meeting at the secretary-level to determine some specific projects in water resources utilisation and management.

Hasina demands

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corruption and terrorism, She added.

Recalling the prime minister's first speech to the nation and the 100-day programme of her government, Hasina said, "You pledged to run your cabinet with a spirit identical to that in the western democracies. Now I would like to know whether you will resign admitting your failures in line with the tradition of the western democracies?"

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